the Portuguese and Sri Lankans are shown here also to include points of exchange and adaptation. Perhaps the major contribution of the essays in this work is to demonstrate that colonialism gave rise to complex, multifaceted religious identities and cultural forms. Aside from containing valuable footnotes to assist researchers in this field, *Re-exploring the Links* is highly recommended as a work that models how one might reconceptualize religious encounters and cultural transformations that occur within a colonial context. This innovative volume encourages scholars to consider how the theme of 'connections' might change the ways in which they view religion, history, and culture in the early modern age.

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Paul Marshall. *Mystical Encounters with the Natural World: Experiences and Explanations*. New York: Oxford University Press, (2005), ix + 324 pp., $125.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978 0 19 927943 2.

This is a terribly exciting book and, potentially, a very important one. Whether it becomes an important work will depend largely on whether the field is ready and capable of receiving what we might call Marshall's challenge. That, of course, remains to be seen. What I would like to do here is note a few general features of the book and then spell out what I see as that challenge, which, at the bottom, functions as a potential renewal of metaphysical theorising within the study of comparative mystical literature.

Dividing his book into two parts, Marshall engages in a general phenomenology of mystical encounters with the natural world in Part I, and then gives us a learned history of the scholarship on such states in Part II. Hence, the subtitle of the book, 'Experiences and Explanations'. The book deals primarily with modern Western materials in English, but there are also some fascinating forays into Indian systems, particularly Kashmir Shaivism and Jainism, and a few passing references to shamanism, Sufism, and Buddhism. This comparative method works mostly behind the scenes, but it works deeply and effectively nonetheless. Thus Marshall argues for innate and therefore universal psychological and biological structures. These intrapersonal dimensions allow him to make general comparisons across times and climes. To take just one simple but potent example, Marshall reads the universal mystical experience of luminosity not simply as a function of the category of light in the symbolic repertoire of culture after culture (much less in the universal human experience of a strange burning globe in the sky), but as an expression of a shared psychosomatic base that generates these luminous experiences out of its own deepest nature. I find this incredibly refreshing and patently sane. It is like waking up after a long ontological sleep.

There are many gems that sparkle along the way here. Among these, one might quickly list: Marshall's brief treatment of his own natural mystical experiences; a learned discussion of Romanticism as a kind of centuries-long cultural seeding or preparation for these often secular forms of nature mysticism; a detailed treatment of the correspondence between Edward Carpenter and Richard Maurice Bucke in the 1890s that produced their respective evolutionary mysticisms (with Carpenter's Hindu-influenced, socially radical, and homoerotically friendly 'socio-mystical concept of democracy' being the far more sophisticated, and far more ignored, of the two); and a fascinating biographical discussion of Walter Stace's early religious life, disillusionment, and return to pure Spirit via his classic text, W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1960). Finally, Marshall provides us with an excellent bibliography that brings the scholarship on nature mysticism up to the present after a 45-year silence, that is, since R. C. Zaehner and William Stace, neither of whom could quite bring themselves to appreciate the subject, mostly, Marshall argues, because of their own philosophical commitments and the manner in which these blinded them to central features of the data.

It is this relative silence and this refusal to look at the full range of data that I personally find so interesting, and so significant. We all know what happened in those intervening years: how Katz's potent contextualist turn came to dominate the discussion; how this turn made the scholarship immeasurably better, richer, deeper, more thoughtful; how there were other equally important turns involving philology and language, psychoanalysis and the body, feminism and gender, Continental philosophy and postmodernism, and now neuroscience and the brain. The latter turn to the brain seems as rich in technology and possibility as it appears weak in phenomenological and hermeneutical sophistication.

It is precisely to such empirical silences, theoretical possibilities, and present neurobiological weaknesses that Marshall has the most to say, I believe. Where, after all, is there an extensive discussion of mystical encounters with the natural world in this vast literature? It is certainly not difficult to imagine why such encounters might have been ignored. The spontaneity, novelty, and non-religious nature of many such experiences, after all, seriously challenge the central convictions of the scholarly literature, particularly its strong tendency to favor relativistic, contextualist, conservative, linguistic, and now reductive neurobiological models of explanation.

It is not likely the case that the latter models are wrong or misguided. It is more that they are probably half right. Human beings, after all, have experiences all the time that cannot be explained with conservative contextualist theories or models of the mind that identify human consciousness, completely and without remainder, with the brain. Marshall refers here to the very strong and consistent textual data for paranormal experiences (it is exceedingly difficult to see how contextualism can

explain the often veridical cognitions of telepathy), to dramatic examples of extracerebral cognition in mystical literature, and to the 'filtration thesis' of theorists ranging from F. W. H. Myers and William James, to Henri Bergson and Aldous Huxley. Within the latter thesis, consciousness is fundamentally a transpersonal subject that is not produced by the brain but filtered through it, and all the findings of something like neuroscience—about what part of the brain fires when and in what context—are so many examples of correlation, not causation.

Very much related to this filtration thesis of consciousness is what we might call Marshall's trigger thesis. Basically, what he argues here is that mystical experiences can be triggered by a vast array of contexts and catalysts, but that none of these are sufficient to explain the content and nature of the transpersonal forms of consciousness triggered. So, for example, a human being might enter a life-changing altered state of consciousness through a meditative de-conditioning discipline, a profound sexual experience, a car wreck, a psychedelic substance, a religious ritual, a mental illness, a poem, even a drab urban landscape. *Anything* that temporarily removes or suppresses the filter of the brain so that mind-at-large might manifest itself is a potential trigger. But this does not mean that the altered state of consciousness can be reduced to or explained by the brain, much less the meditative discipline, the orgasm, the car crash, the LSD, or the religious ritual.

This trigger thesis points in turn to Marshall's larger 'metaphysical suggestion', with which he concludes the book. The best metaphysical model we have for explaining *all* the data of mystical literature, he suggests, is a 'realist idealism', that is, a metaphysics that is '*realist* in its attitude towards the external world, *representative* in its theory of perception, and *monadological* in its theory of matter and the finer details of experiential organization' (p. 261). Such a metaphysics resonates deeply with Leibniz and Berkeley, modern physics, and certain elements of Jainism and Kashmir Shaivism. Marshall is crystal clear that such a metaphysical base can only be one component of a total hermeneutic, which of course would also require all the hard-won accomplishments of the contextualist, psychological, erotic, postmodern, and neurobiological turns. What we need now, he suggests further, is not simply more philosophical argument, which can never really close the case, but better physics, better neuro-psychology, and, above all, more open-ended metaphysical commitments that do not unduly restrict our perceptual and hermeneutical filters. We have to stop squinting. We have to open our eyes.

I will not hide my enthusiasms for these suggestions or for Marshall's wonderful book. My only real criticism involves one of its numerous subtexts. Marshall—perhaps following Stace?—appears to presume that mystical experiences somehow instill sympathy, compassion, and moral behavior in those who undergo them. Sometimes this is true. Sometimes this is not true. If the full data of mystical literature means anything, it is that there is no necessary connection between the mystical and the ethical. Not only that, sometimes patently immoral acts catalyse profound mystical events. Zaehner saw all of this very clearly and said so very provocatively. A similar insight, although never made explicit, is encoded in Marshall's central trigger thesis. Car wrecks and acts of sexual abuse are hardly moral events, but they can be very effective triggers of mystical states. Following Marshall, we might say that this admittedly tells us nothing about the 'object' of mystical experience, which may indeed be deeply moral, but it does tell us some rather provocative things about the workings of the brain-filter. As I have always argued (mostly with respect to sexual abuse and the mystical), the Doors of the House of the Mystical should not be confused with what is inside the House, but the psychodynamics of the openings and closings of these Doors should nonetheless engage us, and engage us deeply, as hermeneuts of comparative mystical literature.

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Horst Junginger (editor). *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*. Leiden/Boston:Brill, 2007, 663 pp., €139/$199 (hardback), ISBN 978 90 04 16326 3.

No ideology arouses such strong emotions as fascism. Studies of the impact of this violence-oriented, hierarchic-loving and bourgeoisie ideology on scholarly and scientific discourse have been carried out in various disciplines in recent times. The time is, surely, ripe for a critical analysis of how (if at all) fascism and its militant twin, National Socialism, during its peak of political and cultural power during the 1920–40s, influenced the study of religion. Based on a 2004 conference at the Department of the Study of Religion of the Eberhard-Karls-Universität of Tübingen, *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism* is a rich, voluminous, and most welcome anthology.

As is well known, the study of religion suffers from a deep schism when it comes to crucial positions, such as the overall purpose of the study and the basic questions. This schism had, and still has, profound consequences on the institutionalization of the study and on its 'labels'. The majority of the scholars examined in this book could be labelled 'historians of religion'. This is true for Raffaele Pettazzoni (discussed in separate articles by Eugen Ciurtin and Michael Stausberg), Mircea Eliade (Cristiano Grottanelli, Florin Ţurcanu, Eugen Ciurtin, István Keul, Richard Faber), Georges Dumézil (Cristiano Grottanelli), Stig Wikander (Mihaela Timuş), Joachim Wach (Kurt Rudolph), Harald Biezais (Iveta Leitāne), and Gerardus van der Leeuw and Jan de Vries (Willem Hofstee). Other scholars' orientations leaned towards closely related disciplines, such as history (Bernhard Kummer, discussed by Fritz Heinrich), philology (Walther Wüst and Hermann Günter, discussed by Horst Junginger and Bruce Lincoln,